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INFO RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5865
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 3561
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [SCUL](#) [ID](#)
SUBJECT: INDONESIA EFFUSIVELY WELCOMES BARACK OBAMA AS
PRESIDENT

REF: JAKARTA 113

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1. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulate General Surabaya and Consulate Medan.

2. (U) SUMMARY: Indonesians across the archipelago exuberantly greeted President Barack Obama's Inauguration on January 20. At a formal ball in Jakarta held during the Inauguration ceremonies, a Presidential advisor read a statement from President Yudhoyono pledging Indonesia's fullest cooperation with President Obama in order to promote "enduring peace and progress." President Obama's sister, Maya Soetoro-Ng, in a video statement responded with a written message from the President, stating, in part, "My childhood years in Jakarta provided me with many lessons and memories that I carry with me to this day." Media play was overwhelmingly positive. END SUMMARY.

CELEBRATING THE NEW PRESIDENT

3. (U) Celebrations were held across Indonesia in honor of the January 20 Inaugural ceremonies. At an "Inauguration Ball" held by "the Friends of Obama" at the Jakarta Ritz Carlton, attended by Ambassador Hume, Presidential advisor Dino Patti Djalal read a warm message from President Yudhoyono. Yudhoyono noted that President Obama had spent part of his childhood in Indonesia and understands the Indonesian people well, adding that he looks "forward to welcoming him back someday." In a video statement, Maya Soetoro-Ng, now living in Hawaii, read a warm message on behalf of her brother in which he fondly remembered his childhood years in Jakarta. The full text of both messages is contained in paras 9-10.

4. (U) Ambassador Hume, in his remarks at the ball, discussed the two country's partnership and hailed their close cooperation in many fields. The Ambassador said "Americans have reason to be grateful" that President Obama had lived in Indonesia.

5. (U) At a "blessing" (selamatan) ceremony held by President Obama's former classmates at his childhood school in Jakarta, Primary School Menteng 1 (see reftel), one of his former schoolmates and successful designer, Maya Suharnoko, said, "This is a dream come true, I hope not only for Americans but also for the citizens of the world, because Obama is a child of the world, so this is also our victory." In Medan, North Sumatra, a Consulate exhibition of poster art depicting President Obama, by American artists, was enthusiastically attended, while five Sumatran governors were among the thousands who sent goodwill messages. The Ambassador also spoke at an American Chamber of Commerce event held in Jakarta on January 21.

MEDIA EFFUSIVE

6. (U) Indonesian media of all stripes blanketed the nation with glowing stories about the Inauguration. This included complete television coverage of Inauguration ceremonies until the wee hours of the morning Jakarta time. Reportedly, millions of viewers stayed up past 3 a.m. to watch. Newspaper commentary praised the inauguration of the first African-American President and noted that America is a nation of change. Many of the reporters and commentators were those whom the Embassy facilitated or funded to cover the elections in the fall.

7. (U) Indonesia's most respected national daily "Kompas" penned an editorial reflecting the views of many Indonesians, stating, "The 44th U.S. President will bring a fresh wind of big change in the midst of a world under extreme pressure from the economic crisis, climate chaos, breakout of war in a number of places." The Ambassador and other Mission officers gave numerous interviews discussing the Inauguration, including commentary in Bahasa Indonesia by Dep Pol/C during

a five-hour television show of the live Inauguration events.

18. (U) Only a few expressed reservations about President Obama's Inauguration speech, regretting that it did not deal more with the Middle East. However, the head of the upper house of Parliament Hidayat Nur Wahid, a popular conservative

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Muslim, commented, "In the context of the Muslim world, Obama is committed to knit new relationships based on ties of mutual trust, benefit and openness."

TEXTS OF THE PRESIDENTS' MESSAGES

19. (U) The following is the text of President Yudhoyono's congratulatory message to President Obama:

The President of the Republic of Indonesia
Message from Dr. H. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
President of the Republic of Indonesia
Jakarta, January 20th 2009
Bismillahirrahmanirrahim
Assalamu 'alaikum wr. wb.

Good evening. This is a historic day for America, an exciting time for the world, and a special moment for Indonesia.

Barack Obama brings hope to many people around the world, and I wish him all the best as he begins his important job as the 44th President of the United States of America. President Obama assumes office at a critical juncture for humanity, a time of enormous challenges but also boundless opportunity. I will work with (and other world leaders in any way we can to promote enduring peace and progress for our time. Indonesians find it endearing that President Obama spent memorable parts of his childhood in this country. He knows our people, our way of life, our food, and familiar with Bahasa Indonesia. I look forward to welcoming him back someday.

To all of you who are now gathered at the Obama Jakarta Inaugural Ball, thank you for sending our best wishes and our message of friendship and hope for President Barack Obama and for America.

Thank you. Wassalamu alaikum wr. wb.

10. (U) The following is the text of President Obama's message to Indonesia:

January 20, 2009

"Good evening to you in Indonesia. Thank you so much for taking time to join me as I take the oath of office for President of the United States. I have heard through my sister Maya that many of you have expressed support for the change that has come. For that I am grateful. My childhood years in Jakarta provided me with many lessons and memories that I carry with me to this day. I know my mother Ann has many friends still there, some in the audience tonight. Thank you to U.S. Ambassador Cameron Hume and business leader Ron Mullers for organizing this event. Thank all of you again for being here tonight. Terima kasih and selamat malam."

Signed,

Barack Obama
HUME